



*Published by the Connecticut Department of Developmental Services  
Governor M. Jodi Rell | Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara | Deputy Commissioner Kathryn du Pree*

## Department of Developmental Services Announces New Division of Autism Spectrum Services

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) recently celebrated its new **Division of Autism Spectrum Services** at a reception in New Haven. Held at the Quinnipiac Club, the event welcomed families and consumers of the department's **Autism Pilot Program**.

Over the past several years, Governor M. Jodi Rell and the Connecticut State Legislature passed legislation establishing first, the Autism Pilot and then the **Division of Autism Spectrum Services**. The Pilot, in its second year, serves 26 individuals over the age of 21 who have autism but do not



(left to right) Kathy Reddington, State Representative Cathy Abercrombie, Commissioner Peter O'Meara, Lois Rosenwald, and Deputy Commissioner Kathryn du Pree.

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## DDS Employees Honored by Governor Rell

Governor M. Jodi Rell recently presented Department of Developmental Services (DDS) employees **Robert Cox** and **Ernest Henderson** with "**The Governor's Service Award**," the highest honor a state employee can receive.

In a ceremony at the State Capitol, Mr. Cox and Mr. Henderson, Supervisors at the **North Region's Woodbridge Project** in East Hartford, were honored for their dedication to the consumers at this DDS program.



Ernest Henderson and  
Governor M. Jodi Rell



Robert Cox and  
Governor M. Jodi Rell

Steve Robson, DDS Public Program Manager, nominated Mr. Cox and Mr. Henderson for the award.

"Both Bob and Ernie have found in their hearts ways to enhance the lives of residents of Woodbridge," said Mr. Robson. "They spent many hours to improve the living environment and as a result have created a warm inviting place for people to live."

"In addition to being dedicated to their jobs, both gentlemen contributed countless hours of personal time to provide consistently high quality of services," said Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara. "It is this type of dedication and commitment that raises the bar for all who serve people with disabilities."

Mr. Cox and Mr. Henderson were joined by their families as they were presented their awards.



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860.263.2500

### South Region

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Wallingford, CT 06492  
203.294.5121

### West Region

250 Freight Street  
Waterbury, CT 06702  
203.805.7400

### Southbury Training School

P.O. Box 872  
Southbury, CT 06488  
203.586.2000

## New Division of Autism

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have mental retardation. In January 2009, the DDS will issue a report on the pilot program to the Governor and Legislature.

DDS Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara thanked Governor M. Jodi Rell and House Speaker James Amann, who was unable to attend the event, Representative Cathy Abercrombie and Lois Rosenwald, Executive Director of the Autism Spectrum Resource Center in Hamden, for their hard work in making the autism initiative a reality.

"Today is a great day in celebrating the Connecticut Division of Autism Spectrum Services," said Commissioner O'Meara. "This initiative is a step in the right direction. I am also pleased to announce that \$1 million will be added to the current funding next year, which will help increase services and staff."

One of the parents whose son is in the program spoke about how proud she was of her son's accomplishments and how the parents are very excited about the pilot and funding for services. Several expressed appreciation for the quality services provided by the private provider agencies.

"The Pilot has given us an opportunity to work directly with families and consumers," said DDS Autism Coordinator Kathryn Reddington. "It is so exciting to see how the services can make a real difference in a family's life."

## Register for DDS E-Alerts

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) unveiled its new website in October 2007 and response has been extremely positive. In addition to providing extensive information about the department's supports and services, it is a means of communicating important information to our consumers, families and providers.

The site has an **E-Alerts** registration which allows individuals to register with the website and receive high priority alerts. When you register, you can subscribe to receive one or more of the E-Alerts from the following areas of interest: committees & councils; educational information; alerts & advisories, which include federal and state

government and weather alerts; news, press releases, recent events, and RFP's – new business opportunities. **If you want to register** and receive these alerts through your e-mail, visit our website at [www.ct.gov/dds](http://www.ct.gov/dds) and click on the register for E-Alerts on the left side of the home page.

In addition to E-Alerts, DDS has added a **Customer Service Link** for anyone who would like to ask a question or submit a concern. Fill out the Customer Service Form and submit it to the department. These forms will be answered by the agency's Constituent Services Staff. The Customer Service Link is also on the left side of the DDS Home page.

# A Message From Commissioner O'Meara



Peter H. O'Meara

**T**he Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is proud of the services we provide to over 19,000 families in the State of Connecticut. We offer an array of supports from our Birth to Three programs to our newly formed Division of Autism, which serves 26 individuals through the Autism Spectrum Disorders Pilot Program. In some areas, we are joining other states in unveiling our E-Learning Initiative that enables us to have consistent computer-based training across the private and public sectors.

We have been recognized as a national leader for several of our programs and services. Our Emergency Management System database and preparedness plans have been mirrored by many states and our approach to Self Directed Supports in helping families hire and manage their own staff and funds is one of the country's most well developed. Our self direction and self determination principles have given individuals with disabilities the right to have control over their lives and to make choices about the resources they use to support them. The people who

receive supports from DDS have the freedom to decide how to live their lives, the authority over their resources, the support they need to live full lives, and the responsibility for their own decisions and actions.

As we continue to enhance our services and initiate new programs, we are always thankful to have the support of our families. You are the ones who have the toughest job and we are privileged to work with you in supporting your loved one.

## DDS Waiver Updates

In October 2007, the **Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Waiver Policy and Planning Services** resubmitted a renewal application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for the Individual and Family Support (IFS) waiver, which expired on February 1, 2008.

By participating in the **IFS Waiver** and the **Comprehensive Supports Waiver**, DDS is able to offer individuals more options for supports and services. In addition, the state is eligible for reimbursement from the federal government for approximately 50% of the cost. Both waivers set specific dollar limits of services and supports that can be offered based on an individual's assessed level of support need.

Once the renewal application is approved by CMS, the department will submit amendments to both

the IFS and Comprehensive Supports Waivers. Over the past three years, the department received feedback from numerous stakeholder groups regarding ways that the waivers could be improved and some of these improvements, such as new services and a more streamlined process, were included in the amendments to the application.

The department expects to have approval for the new waiver in February and then the amendments will be submitted. The IFS application and amendments, as well as the current Comprehensive Supports waiver are posted on the DDS website at [www.ct.gov/dds](http://www.ct.gov/dds). We welcome feedback on these amendments. **PLEASE FORWARD COMMENTS or questions to Deborah Duval at 860-418-6149 or [deborah.duval@ct.gov](mailto:deborah.duval@ct.gov).**

# North Region Update

## IEP, PPT, Triennial Evaluations, Extended Day, Extended School Year...What does it all mean?

Negotiating the educational process is often difficult and overwhelming for parents of children with disabilities. Within your DDS's Individual and Family Support Division you have available to you an "Educational Liaison." This individual is charged to assist you in the following areas:

- **SUPPORT AND TRAINING** to help you to obtain appropriate educational services for your child.
- **ATTENDANCE** at Planning and Placement Team meetings (PPTs), as requested.
- **SHARING INFORMATION** with you, your DDS case manager and your child's school district about best practices in the field of special education.
- **ASSISTANCE** to you and your child's teacher and other school staff to integrate programs between the home and classroom.
- **COLLABORATION** with the school to assure appropriate implementation of your child's individualized education plans (IEPs).
- **REFERRALS** to local educational resources.
- **FACILITATION** of a person-centered plan for your child.
- **FACILITATION** of good relationships between you and your child's school system.
- **IF YOUR CHILD** was previously in the Birth to Three System, collaboration with your Birth to Three agency, your local school district, your case manager to support the continuity of services for your child.

**TO ACCESS THE EDUCATIONAL LIAISON ASSIGNED TO YOUR TOWN, please contact your child's DDS Case Manager.**

## Job Opportunities Anticipated

Over the past year, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), in conjunction with Governor M. Jodi Rell's Office, other state agencies, and Walgreens Pharmacy management, has been working to provide job opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Walgreens is significantly committed to making a difference in opportunities for people with disabilities in the State of Connecticut.

The national pharmacy chain is anticipating opening a large distribution center in Windsor, Connecticut in August of 2008. Employees are needed to pack goods for distribution to Walgreens stores and unpack and sort items returned to the center that are no longer for sale on their shelves.

Employees will work 40 hours per week in 8-hour shifts at relatively demanding jobs with respect to continuous work and light to moderate physical work. The pay will be determined to start above minimum wage with incremental increases after being on the job for specified time periods.

Transportation is not provided, however CT Transit is exploring the possibility of operating public bus service to the area along the I-91 corridor.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Please visit the Walgreens Outreach site at [www.walgreensoutreach.com](http://www.walgreensoutreach.com).** If you are interested in applying for any of the future available jobs, please submit your name, address and phone number to your case manager.

# South Region Update

## Region to Sponsor Provider Fairs for Consumers and Families

The South Region is pleased to announce that **Provider Fairs** for consumers and families will be held in the Spring of 2008. Two Fairs will be held –

**MONDAY, MARCH 17TH**  
Mitchell College  
Clarke Center  
437 Pequot Avenue  
New London, CT

**TUESDAY, MARCH 18TH**  
Albertus Magnus College  
Campus Center  
700 Prospect Street  
New Haven, CT

Both fairs will be held from 4:00–7:00 PM. In the past, these fairs provided a valuable opportunity to talk with representatives of DDS, provider agencies, and learn about services and programs. Admission to the fairs is free and all DDS South Region

consumers and families, as well as other interested parties, are welcome to attend. We particularly encourage individuals to attend if you:

- Are graduating from high school this year or in the next 2-4 years.
- Are on the DDS Waiting List for residential supports.
- Have been recently allocated funding to purchase family supports, residential services or day/employment supports.
- Are contemplating using portability to change programs and/or service providers.
- Want to plan for the future and learn more about our services and supports.

**Here are some of the exciting informational topics that will be on display at the Fairs:**

✓ Employment Services	✓ Self-Advocacy
✓ Adult Day Program Options	✓ Family Support Networks
✓ Residential Services/Group Homes	✓ Benefits and Entitlements including Title XIX
✓ Individual Supports	✓ Recreation Programs and Camps
✓ Community Training Homes	✓ DDS Family Grants and Support Teams
✓ Certified Respite Providers	✓ School-to-Work Transitional Services
✓ DDS Family Respite Homes	✓ Guardianship and Probate
✓ Camp Harkness	✓ Autism Services
✓ Self Determination/Hiring Your Own Staff	✓ In-Home Supports for Children or Adults

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PROVIDER FAIRS including directions and please visit the DDS web page at [www.ct.gov/dds](http://www.ct.gov/dds) .**

## South Region Plans to Open Two New Respite Homes

The South Region plans to have available two new respite centers in East Haven and Norwich over the next several months. Renovations are underway on the two state-owned properties and once completed the South Region will be able to serve up to 28 guests each weekend in five respite centers. After hiring staff, the new homes should be open to families in Fall 2008.

During the last fiscal year, the region's current respite centers in Hamden, Meriden and Waterford provided care to 148 children and youths up to the age of 18, and another 222 adults. Most families receive two or three scheduled respite weekends per year. However, with the addition of two new centers, more respite will be available for our families.

The centers are open during the school year from Thursday to Monday every week, and full-time for six weeks during the summer. DDS does not charge families for respite weekends, but sliding-scale billing may occur by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) depending on legal liability for your relative and family income. DDS also has limited cash grants available to families to purchase respite care privately, and we maintain lists of individual certified respite caregivers and qualified respite vendors that may be useful.

**PLEASE CONTACT YOUR CASE MANAGER or visit the DDS website at [www.ct.gov/dds](http://www.ct.gov/dds) for more information about respite services.**



# West Region Update

## New Administrators Announced

Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara and Deputy Commissioner Kathryn du Pree recently announced changes to the West Region Management Team.

Southbury Training School (STS) Director **Fritz Gorst** has been serving as West Regional Director for the past several months and will continue to lead the Region through the remainder of this fiscal year. Mr. Gorst is a seasoned administrator who has successfully directed services at STS for the past eight years. His wealth of experience in both Massachusetts and Connecticut and his existing working relationships make him an excellent candidate for this key leadership position.

**Shannon O'Brien** has been named Assistant Regional Director for Private Administrative Services for the region. **Donna Josephson** has been named Assistant Regional Director for Quality Improvement, Risk Management and

Clinical Services for STS. Ms. Josephson's position is new, bringing a third Assistant Regional Director to STS to strengthen the team as Mr. Gorst assumes his new responsibilities.

Ms. O'Brien has worked for the department for over 20 years in a variety of supervisory and managerial capacities, most recently as Resource Manager for the West Region. Her knowledge about community service delivery, managerial ability and consumer advocacy will enhance the region's relationships with the private sector.

Ms. Josephson, who has a long tenure as part of the STS management team brings extensive knowledge and expertise in various federally regulated programs as well as her contributions to the development of quality systems for compliance with the STS Consent Decree.

"We are confident that these appointments will strengthen the administrative leadership and support the current efforts and initiatives in the region", said Commissioner O'Meara.

## Portability & Self Advocacy Trainings

The West Region will be hosting several family forums in the spring. Dates and topics of discussion are noted below. Families and

consumers are invited to choose the date and location that is most convenient.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION or to register, please contact: Joan Fortin, Administrative Assistant at [joan.fortin@ct.gov](mailto:joan.fortin@ct.gov) or 203-805-7420**

### "PREPARING FOR EMPLOYMENT & PORTABILITY"

#### PORTABILITY

DATE: 3/6/08 TIME: 5:30-8:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Danbury Conference Room

DATE: 3/31/08 TIME: 1:00-5:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Norwalk Admin Bldg. Conference Room

### "SELF ADVOCACY: SPEAKING UP AND SPEAKING OUT"

#### SELF ADVOCACY

DATE: 3/12/08 TIME: 1:30-5:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Stratford Training Room

DATE: 4/3/08 TIME: 5:30-8:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Cheshire Training Room

## Benefits Counseling Program Available

The **Connect to Work Center** provides individualized benefits planning and counseling for people on **Social Security Disability (SSDI)** and/or **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** benefits. Their job is to help you understand how work will effect all of your federal and state benefits. The Center's Benefits Specialists can provide:

- Specific information on the impact that working has on all the benefits received by you or your family.
- Problem solving for your specific concerns.
- Follow-up services after you return to work.

To receive benefits counseling services, you must be working or considering going to work in the near future.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION please contact:**  
**1-800-773-4636, TTY 1-860-424-4839,**  
**e-mail: [connecttowork.dss@po.state.ct.us](mailto:connecttowork.dss@po.state.ct.us)**

# Birth to Three System Expands Eligibility and Services

The Department of Developmental Services' (DDS) **Birth to Three System** recently announced expanded eligibility guidelines and new autism-specific early intervention programs.

As part of the eligibility expansion, babies born at 28 weeks gestation or less, babies born weighing less than 1,000 grams, babies and toddlers with mild or unilateral hearing loss, and toddlers with significant delays in expressive language with a biological risk factor should be referred to the Birth to Three early intervention program. These new eligibility guidelines enhance a long list of medical conditions that make a child automatically eligible for services. In addition, infants and toddlers without a diagnosis but who show a significant developmental delay can also receive early intervention supports.

The Birth to Three System also added new programs focusing on autism. In response to heightened concern surrounding effective service provision for

children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and the recent Academy of Pediatrics recommendation to screen all children at 18 and 24 months of age for ASD, Birth to Three has selected six agencies to operate the new programs. These agencies will complement the ongoing services provided by 38 agencies across the state serving children with a variety of developmental delays and their families. These new programs are expected to cover 80% of the population under age three while other eligible children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder will continue to be well supported by current approved providers.

The autism-specific programs began accepting referrals on January 2, 2008.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION on all Birth to Three programs is available at [www.birth23.org](http://www.birth23.org) or at 1-800-505-7000.**



## Family and Caregiver Workshop

**The Second Annual Grace Curtis Luncheon, "Stand Up and Be Counted,"** will be held at the Mystic Marriott in Mystic, Connecticut on March 24th from 9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Inaugurated last year in memory of longtime advocate from southeastern Connecticut, Mrs. Grace Curtis, this year's luncheon has grown to a full day event. The workshop is sponsored by the **Family Support Network of Connecticut** and is planned to be a day of laughter, learning, and appreciation for those who work and support individuals with special needs, especially parents, caregivers, and professionals.

Two national speakers will be featured: **Mimi Donaldson**, author of *"Bless Your Stress: It Means You're Still Alive,"* and **John Elder Robison**, who is a person with Aspergers and author of *"Look Me in the Eye"*.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION or to register, contact April Dipollina at [dipollina@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dipollina@sbcglobal.net) or visit the Department of Developmental Services website at: [www.ct.gov/dds](http://www.ct.gov/dds) for the event announcement.**

## Individual Plan Review Meetings – Changes Planned

This year, you will notice a reduction in the frequency of meetings during the year to review your family member's individual plan. Individual plans will be updated annually at a team meeting, or more often if your family member's situation changes, resulting in an adjustment to services. This change will enable team members and case managers to spend more time providing direct services.

Service providers will continue ongoing progress reviews and will develop reports every six months, which will be shared with you. Your case manager will continue to monitor services and progress of your family member. The reduction in the frequency of meetings should have no impact on the quality of services. Let your case manager know if, at any time, you feel your family member's needs have changed, and the team should convene to review the plan of services.

## Direct to Families

Department of Developmental Services  
460 Capitol Ave  
Hartford, CT 06106

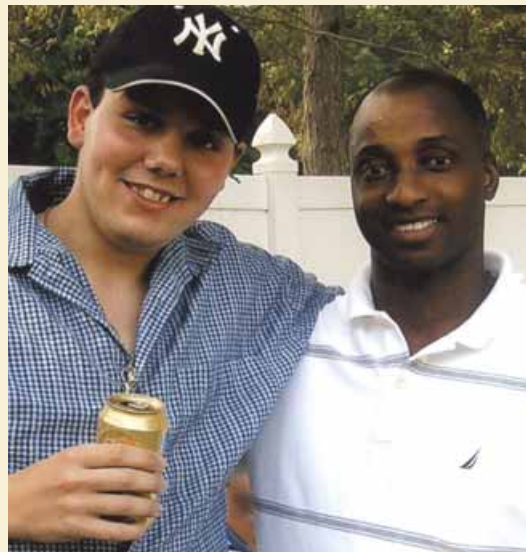
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Standard  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit #7  
East Hampton, CT

# We Walk Together *Over the Span of a Lifetime ...*

## Woodbridge Program Celebrates Friendship

It was a day of getting old friends together and making new friends as over 30 individuals and staff gathered for the **First Annual Woodbridge Program Reunion** in East Hartford. **The Woodbridge Center** is a twelve bed facility operated by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) North Region. It is designed to provide a safe and structured homelike setting for individuals who have experienced a crisis in their lives. The primary purpose of the Woodbridge Center is to successfully transition individuals back to their homes.

"This reunion was an opportunity for the individuals we serve to renew their friendships with others and DDS employees," said Kevin Martin, DDS Program Supervisor. "The day was such a success that we plan to hold a reunion next year."



(left to right) Jason Souza and Joseph Addea are just two of many who attended the recent Woodbridge Program Reunion. Many people who have called the Woodbridge Center home over the past few years were able to catch up with old friends.